**The Believing and Doubting Game**

This is a strategy that helps students think about both sides of an issue, generate reasons, think about evidence and research strategies, and discuss stakeholders.

The strategy can lead to various formal/final products: argumentative essays, letters, debates, presentations. On the other hand, this strategy can simply be a way to discuss an issue during class with a final free-write or reflection.

One caveat: Students need to have some understanding of the topic before you try this strategy. You can provide a very short reading or video, use this at the end of a whole novel/unit/movie/chapter/etc., or choose something students know a lot about from personal experience.

**Steps:**

Students have exposure to the topic (or get to read a segment/watch a video right at the beginning of class)

Put a statement up on the board. It must be something that is debatable (see reverse for some ideas)

1. Tell students: First we will BELIEVE this statement. Write down all of the reasons you can think of that those who BELIEVE this statement might give.

Five-minute brainstorm

Share in a group (I like 3)

Create a group list in the group of 3

2. Ask students to share some of the reasons and put them up somewhere (whiteboard, typed in a word doc, poster paper). Model asking these questions:

* Is this reason TRUE?
  + How do I know?
  + If I don’t know, how would I find out?
* Does this reason actually support this belief?
  + How so?
  + Can I write a sentence saying why that reason supports this belief?

3. Spend some time thinking about EVIDENCE

* What is evidence?
* Where does it come from?
* If you don’t have it off the top of your head, where might you get the evidence?

4. Tell the students: Next we will DOUBT this statement. Write down all the reasons you can think of that those who DOUBT this statement might give.

Five-minute brainstorm

Share in a group (I like 3)

Create a group list in the group of 3

5. Put the list of reasons to DOUBT up (you could ask the students to add their items to a whiteboard themselves. This would add movement to the lesson at a good point)

Ask a student/s to model answering the questions:

Is this reason true?

How do I know? How would I find out?

Does this reason support the evidence?

How do I know? Can I make a statement summarizing why?

6. Start thinking about stakeholders. Ask students:

Who might hold this BELIEF?

Who might hold the DOUBT?

For each person, which pieces of evidence might be most convincing? Least convincing?

7. Provide some form of closure:

* Ask students to do a quickwrite reflecting on one of the following:
  + At the beginning of class, did you believe or doubt the statement? What do you think now? What do you think is the biggest reason you currently hold this position? (could lead to a discussion the next day of bias or about metacognition)
  + Choose a stakeholder and brainstorm about how you might try to convince him/her to change positions (could be pre-writing for a persuasive letter)
  + Choose a reason and brainstorm the kinds of evidence you need to find to decide if the reason is true or not (bring this to class tomorrow if you want to continue the topic)
* Put students into groups to debate the topic in a later class. Ask teams to start ranking their reasons for most persuasive and/or to start thinking about how to find good evidence.

**Topic Ideas:**

* The elk reintroduction program in Missouri is a good idea. (environmental ed, science)
* High caffeine energy drinks should not be sold to minors (health, general interest)
* Government surveillance programs are necessary for the safety of the country (current events, government)
* At the end of the play *The Crucible,* John Proctor made the right decision in refusing to sign the confession (American Lit)
* The speed limits in Monett are too low (general interest)
* Anything related to school policies

Adapted from: “The Believing Game and How to Make Conflicting Opinions More Fruitful” by Peter Elbow